

Alaska State Legislature

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Senator Lesil McGuire

Sponsor Statement for 210

“An Act relating to crimes against children.”

On February 8, 2012 the Children’s Justice Task Force (CJA) a federally-mandated, state-wide multidisciplinary group presented their findings to the Joint Senate Judiciary and HESS Committees with their system recommendations for improvement through criminal legislation. I became aware through this presentation, research, and other important conversations that we have shortcomings in the current criminal laws regarding the prosecution of harm to children.

Those that suffer from these short comings are Alaska’s children and the numbers are staggering. In 2008, approximately 12,400 children were likely victims of at least one incident of maltreatment, which breaks down to 34 children per day. In the instance of a child death, 1 out of every 5 was related to maltreatment.

SB 210 works with the recommendations from CJA to create tougher penalties on crimes committed against a child. The bill includes several different measures including modifying statutes to create increased criminal liability for assaults to children, strengthens statutes regarding exposure of children to drugs, increases penalties when a parent intentionally withholds adequate food or liquids, and creates a criminal law that prohibits an incarcerated person from contacting a victim prior to trial and sentencing.

Together, the Legislature can assist our future generations by providing them with laws that protect their rights and create safer communities for their growth and development. I urge your support for this legislation.